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SUBJECT: SOMALIA - SOMALILAND PRESIDENT RIYALE REJECTS
OPPOSITION ELECTION COMMISSION NOMINEES

Classified By: Ambassador Ranneberger for reasons 1.4 (b,d).

11. (C) Summary: Somaliland President Riyale, in a likely attempt to delay naming his own nominees, rejected two opposition nominations for the National Electoral Commission (NEC). Riyale managed to convince opposition UCID party Chairman Faisal to withdraw his nominee. In an October 13 telecon with the Ambassador, Riyale said guessed that Kulmiye party Chairman Silanyo would propose a new nominee. However, Silanyo in an October 13 telecon told us that Riyale does not have the right nor the grounds to reject Kulmiye's nominee. In addition, contacts tell us Riyale on October 12 held closed door meetings with the , Somaliland's elder-based upper house of parliament (the Guurti), in an effort to broker negotiations over its NEC nominations. The Ambassador urged Riyale to resolve disputes over the composition of the NEC quickly and reminded Riyale that it is important that Somaliland serve as a good example of democratization in the region. We are encouraging all parties to resolve the NEC issue and move forward on the election process. End summary.

12. (C) President Riyale has in recent days rejected two opposition party nominations for the NEC on technical grounds. Riyale publicly complained that the UCID nominee served on the previous NEC and that the Kulmiye nominee was a party board member. Contacts in Somaliland tell us Riyale is worried that the Kulmiye nominee, if appointed, would have too much influence in the NEC because she is a well-regarded public figure, "known for getting things done". UCID party chairman Faisal reportedly accepted the President's rejection of his candidate and nominated another commissioner. (Note: We have been unable to contact Faisal, who is reportedly en route to Nairobi. End note.) However, Kulmiye Chairman Ahmed Silanyo told us that his party's candidate resigned long ago from Kulmiye's Executive Board. (Note: Riyale had argued that the presence of the candidate on the Executive Board made her ineligible to join the NEC. End note.) Silanyo in an October 12 press statement alleged that Somaliland's electoral law gives only the Guurti, not the President, the authority to consider NEC nominations. Silanyo told us that Riyale on October 12 had appeared convinced by many of Silanyo's arguments but that Riyale's inner circle later influenced the President.

13. (C) In an October 13 telecon with the Ambassador, Riyale reiterated concerns that the Kulmiye nominee was an Executive Board member. Riyale told the Ambassador that UCID and Kulmiye's actions broke Somaliland electoral law. Riyale alleged to Ambassador that he had held talks with Silanyo on October 12 and expressed confidence that Silanyo would agree to propose a new nominee. The Ambassador urged Riyale to resolve disputes over the composition of the NEC quickly and reminded Riyale that it is important that Somaliland serve as

a good example of democratization in the region.

¶4. (C) Our contacts tell us Riyale is probably also rejecting the opposition candidates in order to buy time for negotiations with the Guurti over its nominees. The Guurti Chairman appears to have outmaneuvered Riyale in clan terms, putting the President in a politically difficult position.

(Note: Riyale's Gadabursi subclan is historically represented by Guurti representatives to the NEC. The Chairman however,, reportedly wants to name a Warsengeli and an Arab Issaq to the NEC instead of a Gadabursi. This leaves Riyale with the difficult choice of nominating a Gadabursi who is not a strong ally of the President or opening himself up to political criticism that he is nominating his family, if he appoints a supporter from his own subclan. End note.)

¶5. (C) The Ambassador told Riyale that he would like to follow up weekly with the President and pressed for quick agreement on composition of the NEC. We are encouraging all parties to resolve the NEC issue so that they may move forward on the election process.

RANNEBERGER